

Freedom of the Press

Senegal's press freedom climate continued to improve in 2013 under President Macky Sall, who took office in early 2012. Many media outlets published and broadcast strident antigovernment views and reports, and journalists generally faced fewer instances of physical and legal harassment than in the past. However, promises to decriminalize defamation went unfulfilled, and no progress was made on access to information legislation.

Article 8 of the 2001 constitution protects freedoms of expression and the press, and Article 10 guarantees the "right to express opinions freely, in words, in writing, in images, [and] by peaceful marching." These freedoms are occasionally limited in practice. Under Sall's predecessor, President Abdoulaye Wade, the government used provisions of the 1977 penal code—including Article 80, which criminalizes vaguely defined threats to national security—to harass, prosecute, fine, and incarcerate critical journalists; the use of these provisions has declined under Sall.

Despite Sall's pledge in November 2012 to decriminalize defamation, the law remains on the books. In August 2013, three journalists with the private daily *Le Quotidien* were each sentenced to one month in prison and fined 1 million CFA francs (\$2,000) on charges of defaming former foreign minister Alioune Badara Cissé. The defendants—reporter Mamadou Biaye, news intern Bastien David, and managing editor Madiambal Diagne—were also ordered to pay 10 million CFA francs in damages to Cissé. The complaint stemmed from an article published in June about Cissé's dismissal from office and isolation within the ruling party. *Le Quotidien* was ordered closed for three months. The threat of such charges has reportedly led journalists to practice a degree of self-censorship.

Following a seminar with civil society leaders and journalists in June 2011, legislators and the minister of communication made a commitment to adopt access to information legislation. However, no such law was passed by the end of 2013.

The National Council of Audiovisual Regulation (CNRA) was established in 2006, replacing the previous media regulator, the High Audiovisual Council (HCA). Composed of nine members appointed by the head of state, the new council was seen as a way to respond to a growing media landscape and related challenges. In December 2013, the CNRA issued a formal notice to the Walfadjri media group, demanding that it suspend broadcasts of radio and television advertisements promoting an upcoming edition of the program *Sortie*, carried on Walf TV, one of Walfadjri's outlets. The CNRA claimed that the ads were an attack on the presidency and a threat to "national unity, the secular character of the state, and public order." The offending segments of the show itself were also included in the warning. The program was originally scheduled to air on December 29, 2013.

Journalists occasionally face harassment, detention, and assault, mainly by the authorities, although such problems have declined since Sall took power. In May 2013, Senegalese officials questioned Chadian blogger and journalist Makaila Nguébila about his work—which was frequently critical of the Chadian government—and his association with other critical Chadian bloggers recently arrested in that country. After questioning, Nguébila, who had lived in Senegal since 2005, was handcuffed, placed on a flight to Conakry, Guinea, and expelled from the country.

Many private, independent print publications and three government-affiliated newspapers publish regularly

in the capital, though their distribution in rural areas is irregular at best. Radio is the most important source of news due to high illiteracy rates, and a number of community, private, and public radio stations operate across the country, with more than 80 radio frequencies allocated to date. Some community radio operators have complained that frequencies are not allocated in a transparent manner. There are at least seven private television channels, but they mainly carry entertainment programming. The state-owned Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise (RTS) generally favors the government in its news coverage, and the president oversees the selection of its 12-member board. Under Wade, the government was accused of selectively granting or withholding state subsidies to influence media outlets, a practice that appears to have continued under Sall. Foreign satellite television and radio stations, including Radio France Internationale and the British Broadcasting Corporation, are available and unrestricted. Internet access is unrestricted and reached 21 percent of the population in 2013. Growth in mobile-telephone use in recent years has expanded access to news and social-networking sites for many Senegalese.

2014 Scores

Press Status

Partly Free

Press Freedom Score

(0 = best, 100 = worst)

48

Legal Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

18

Political Environment

(0 = best, 40 = worst)

16

Economic Environment

(0 = best, 30 = worst)

14